

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus comprising:

a vehicle body-side bracket mounted to a vehicle body member to have a pair of side plate portions opposed each other to be extended in a vertical direction;

a steering column for supporting a steering shaft to be rotatable therein, the steering column being formed with a distance unit expanded by hydroforming plastic working and having a pair of opposite side portions disposed to be clamped between said side plate portions of said body-side bracket to fix a position of said steering column; and

an adjusting mechanism operable to clamp and release said opposite side portions of said distance unit with respect to said side plate portions of said body-side bracket to permit adjustment of the steering column position,

wherein said steering column is formed with a reinforcement portion for enhancing clamping rigidity of said distance unit with respect to said side plate portions,

    | said reinforcement portion couples said opposite side portions of said distance unit together in at least one of an upper part and lower part of said opposite side portions, and

    | said reinforcement portion includes at least one convex streak or concave streak which couples said opposite side portions.

7. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said steering column is adjustable at least in one of a tilting direction or a telescopic direction with respect to said body-side bracket.

8-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus comprising:

a vehicle body-side bracket mounted to a vehicle body member and having a pair of side plate portions opposed each other;

a steering column having an expanded portion with a pair of opposite side portions disposed to be clamped between said side plate portions of the body-side bracket to fix a position of said steering column; and

an adjusting mechanism operable to clamp and release said opposite side portions of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body-side bracket to permit adjustment of the steering column position,

wherein an upper wall portion of the steering column between said opposite side portions of said expanded portion is formed with a reinforcement portion which enhances a clamping rigidity of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body side bracket,

said reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band on said upper wall portion, and

said band couples said opposite side portions of said expanded portion.

15. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a plurality of said bands.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 14, wherein a further reinforcement portion is formed on a bottom wall of said expanded portion.

18. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said steering column is adjustable at least in one of a tilting direction or a telescopic direction with respect to said body-side bracket.

19-20. (Canceled)

21. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus comprising:

a vehicle body-side bracket mounted to a vehicle body member and having a pair of side plate portions opposed each other;

a steering column having an expanded portion with a pair of opposite side portions disposed to be clamped between said side plate portions of the body-side bracket to fix a position of said steering column; and

an adjusting mechanism operable to clamp and release said opposite side portions of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body-side bracket to permit adjustment of the steering column position,

wherein an upper wall portion of the steering column between said opposite side portions of said expanded portion is formed with a reinforcement portion which enhances a clamping rigidity of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body side bracket,

said upper wall portion of said steering column has an arch-shaped cross-section, and

said reinforcement portion extends circumferentially of said upper wall portion.

22. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band.

23. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said band couples said opposite side portions of said expanded portion.

24. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a plurality of said bands.

25. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a plurality of said bands.

26. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein a further reinforcement portion is formed on a bottom wall of said expanded portion.

27. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said steering column is adjustable at least in one of a tilting direction or a telescopic direction with respect to said body-side bracket.

28. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said cross-section of said upper wall is arcuate.

29. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said expanded portion is formed by hydroforming.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said reinforcement band extends along a plane transverse to an axis of said steering column.

32. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave formation on said upper wall portion.

33. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said further reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band formed on said

bottom wall so as to couple said opposite side portions of said expanded portion.

34. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim 26, wherein said further reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band formed on said bottom wall so as to couple said opposite side portions of said expanded portion.

35. (New) A steering column apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said reinforcement portion couples said opposite side portions of said distance unit together in each of an upper part and a lower part of said opposite side portions, and said reinforcement portion includes for each of said upper part and said lower part of said opposite side portions, respectively, at least one convex streak or concave streak which couples said opposite side portions.